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SUBJECT: EASTERN INDONESIA: ANTI-TRAFFICKING EFFORTS IN LOMBOK

REF: SURABAYA 33

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¶1. (SBU) Consulate General Surabaya Pol/Econ Officer and Pol/Econ Assistant assessed anti-human trafficking efforts during a visit to the island of Lombok in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), September 11-13. Anti-trafficking NGOs described poor coordination of anti-trafficking activities and victims' assistance between NGOs, provincial social services, and police. Adding to problems within the anti-trafficking community, at least one provincial parliamentarian is reported to have been directly responsible for intimidating drafters of local anti-trafficking legislation.

"There is No Trafficking Here"

¶2. (SBU) Lombok -- a poor, agrarian and predominantly Muslim part of NTB -- is trying to become better known as a destination for foreign tourists than for its tobacco fields and legions of overseas workers. NTB currently ranks second after East Java as a supplier of overseas workers. A hopeful billboard at Lombok's airport reads, "Welcome to Lombok, Bali's Sister Island." Officials in the provincial capital say that tourist trade has yet to make inroads beyond beaches such as Senggigi, located in Western Lombok nearest Bali. Provincial social services officers cited a weak educational system and few employment opportunities outside the agricultural sector as key drivers for the labor outflow.

¶3. (SBU) Lombok ranks near the bottom on most socio-economic indicators, including literacy, education levels and expenditure per capita. This pushes tens of thousands of residents to migrate each year in search of a better job and income, making them vulnerable to trafficking. According to GOI statistics, some one in 11 migrant workers originated from Lombok in 2005, compared with the fact that only one in 58 Indonesians are from Lombok.

¶4. (SBU) In recognition of NTB's growing trafficking problem, NTB has established a Provincial Action Committee for combating trafficking, child labor and child prostitution. However, anti-Trafficking NGOs report that corruption and conflict of interest among several provincial parliamentarians have rendered the Committee ineffective. Indeed, provincial officials, including the Governor, Mr. H. Lalu Serinate, are described as the key stumbling blocks to progress against human trafficking. According to anti-trafficking NGO Panca Karsa, on the same day that Governor Serinate stated publicly that "there is no trafficking problem here," Panca Karsa was assisting 12 new trafficking victims in its shelters.

Provincial Interference

15. (SBU) One NGO reported that a provincial assembly member in charge of regulating worker recruitment practices is himself an investor in a placement agency. When a legal drafting team comprised of provincial officials and NGO lawyers held meetings during the drafting process, "hired thugs" burst into their meeting and threatened to beat them up if they did not stop. Drafting team members were certain that the thugs worked for local placement agencies and were sent there to intimidate them.

16. (SBU) At the local level, there is widespread recognition of the need to tighten regulations on recruiting by placement agencies. Improved legislation is moving slowly forward at the sub-provincial level with varying degrees of progress. Despite some access to training and funds, the NTB-based NGOs we spoke with reported difficulty in coordinating province-wide anti-trafficking efforts. Differences in focus and expertise were cited as significant barriers to creating an effective overall strategy. The NGOs requested U.S. assistance to help jump start these efforts and encourage greater cooperation and coordination. Panca Karsa is the recipient of a small grant from the Department of State through DRL. Beauty Erawati, the director of LPH APIK (Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan dan Demokrasi) will soon be traveling to the U.S. on an international visitor's program grant.

MCCLELLAND